

The Princess's Spirit Trilogy:

The 2010s Culture Wars Trap

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The Princess's Spirit Trilogy #3: The 2010s Culture Wars Trap

In this finale, Angelle continues to pursue her dream to become Cultural Royalty of Pacificland, while also trying to make her world a better place for all, in the name of the Princess's Spirit. But while Angelle believes in the Princess's Spirit vision of freedom, dreams, love and fairness for all, many conservatives and progressives alike simply do not share her vision. Similar to the situation in many other countries, the 2010s are a divisive time in Pacificland, and those who want their message heard have to navigate wisely and strategically. But sometimes, strategy can backfire, and everything can come undone. Just when her lifelong dreams seem to come true, Angelle hits her biggest crisis ever. Meanwhile, Pacificland gets caught up in a meaningless political stalemate, with reforms like marriage equality stalled seemingly forever. Can Team Princess's Spirit come back from the dead to save Pacificland? Life isn't meant to be easy, but are there rewards for the brave at the end?

For more Princess's Spirit Ideas

There are more fiction and non-fiction titles by TaraElla relating to the Princess's Spirit concept.

TaraElla also maintains a blog and (upcoming) show inspired by the Princess's Spirit, called The TaraElla Show.

Visit **www.taraella.com** to find out more.

Disclaimer

All events described within or in relation to Pacificland are fictional. Any resemblance to real events are coincidental.

While effort has been made to describe accurately the international historical events referenced in the book, the accuracy of such events described cannot be guaranteed.

Chapter 1

It's Make Or Break

Angelle was feeling nervous as she and her team were on their way to Liberty Hall, the venue they had booked for election night. This time, it's either make or break. She could score enough nominations to become Royalty, or she could miss out, which may mean she will never see a better chance again.

"Don't worry, we'll do well. The polls have us in the top three," Natalie said.

"But the last polls were taken a week ago, before my final speech and the surrounding controversy," Angelle said.

"That was a masterpiece. It was a game changer. You should be proud of it," Katie said.

"I guess it represents what I want to say. I just don't know how it will be received out there," Angelle said.

Angelle was referring to a final speech she had given just two days ago, in which she said that she had never been enemies with 'conservatives', that she welcomed everyone into her tent and hoped that everyone can work together. In essence, this had always been true. She had never sought to be enemies with the pro-Jashor forces, it was just that they marked her out as an enemy. She had never sought to oppose the conservatives' agenda for the sake of opposing, she was just standing up for minorities who would suffer under that agenda. And if now the 'conservatives' are changing, so should her attitude to them. Her vision wasn't a world permanently divided for the sake of division, after all.

Of course, this has brought accusations of 'selling out' and 'pandering to the enemy'. CTE is, as expected, leading the witch hunt. Not only because Angelle is one of their major opponents in this election, but also because they can paint themselves as the only 'true progressives'. Right now, not only in Pacificland but also in many other parts of the world, many young people out there are sick and tired of the past three decades of conservatism, and would embrace anything that looked like 'truly progressive'. Angelle is worried that being seen as 'selling out' would play out badly among this growing population, whether this perception actually represents reality or not.

Still, she has no regrets about taking the stances she has taken. Just as she had believed almost a decade ago, the most important thing for a Real Princess to do was to be true to her values and beliefs.

As they walked into the entrance of Liberty Hall, there were already a lot of reporters waiting outside. Team Angelle had become much more important than in previous elections. This was getting real.

"How do you feel about your chances tonight?" one reporter asked.

"I'm feeling confident. I'm cautiously optimistic," Angelle replied, trying her best to look happy.

As Angelle entered the main hall, she could see that it was already well decorated in yellow and purple. The refreshment bar was also ready, with plenty of food for everyone.

"It's already been set up?" Angelle asked, quite surprised.

"Of course, we're big players now, so things like these are automatically done for us. Besides, this is Liberty Hall, not some shabby venue in the suburbs. We tell them how to do it, and they do it," Katie said.

Angelle felt slightly more relieved as the results came in. The Princess's Spirit Party had won 40 seats, which would theoretically be more than enough to make her Royalty. But nowadays, with the 'inflation' in the number of nominations actually needed due to intense competition, this number would be borderline. Still, there are likely to be independents and minor parties she could negotiate with. She

believes she is still likely to get what she wants in the end.

"So we're the second largest party in there now," Natalie said, quite pleased.

"I guess so. Being second to CTE would be a weird position to play in, though," Angelle said, still distracted by her calculations as to which people she could win to secure enough nominations.

"So you're worried?" Mandel asked, almost surprised.

"Don't worry, CTE has no mainstream appeal, and it's not like they have an absolute majority or can work with anyone else in there, so they are still as fringe as ever before despite their 50 seats," Jordan said.

"Meanwhile, I believe the big story in this election is the collapse of the GHP. Only 12

seats! Jenelle will certainly resign as leader now," Katie said.

This thought made Angelle more optimistic. Not because she hated the GHP or Jenelle. Frankly, she has bigger things to worry about nowadays. But the splintering of the GHP vote has meant that there are now many more minor parties and independents, that she can potentially court. In a reflection of the international picture, the conservatives are now fundamentally divided by things like marriage equality, and they surely can't come together again as a functioning bloc any time soon.

Angelle was confident that her strategy to bring people together would work well in an environment like this. She decided that this should be her 'theme' for now on. Tonight's speech to the media will set the tone of things to come.

"Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for being here with the Princess's Spirit Party tonight, as we celebrate our gains in this election. I would firstly like to thank my team, who have been working day and night to make this possible. I also thank you for your loyalty to me, personally. I also wish to thank my family, especially my mom, without whose support I wouldn't be here today.

We are well aware that our supporters come from all walks of life, including struggling young people, everyday families who just want to get on with their lives, the increasing number of people who are sick and tired of the 'culture

wars', and entrepreneurs and others with new ideas who want a chance to make their vision come true, just to name a few groups. Some people have questioned how a party supported by such a diverse range of people can work effectively for all of them. For us, it all boils down to two things: our vision of one society that works for everyone, and our belief in liberty.

Like a Real Princess, we strive to work for the welfare of a wide range of people. We simply don't leave people behind because we somehow judge that we don't like them. We also believe that people are entitled to be different, and society should be inclusive of all. Furthermore, we believe that there can be unity in diversity, and peace in difference, through a common commitment to liberty. A vision of liberty and equal opportunity will benefit everyone in society, whether you are a struggling single mother or an entrepreneur,

whether you are a social visionary or just someone who wants society to leave your family alone. It is the core of our vision.

We are grateful that a record number of voters have decided to support us. To those who have come aboard our ship in this election, we promise that we won't let you down.

Thank you."

Chapter 2

Negotiations

"So you're OK with this plan?" Angelle asked.

"Yes, of course. We're all in this together,"
Natalie said.

"You have always been my top advisor. I really need your help now. Will our team accept the plan, or will they think I'm acting out of my self interest? I can't afford any suspicion or division in our ranks right now, with CTE ready to exploit any sign of those things any minute,"
Angelle said.

"Honestly, I can't be 100% sure, but I think it'll work. I mean, in this complex game we all need to use strategy, and even if there are critics in the short term, in the longer term we will be vindicated, and that will win us respect on a totally different level. We can only prove CTE wrong once and for all that way," Natalie said.

"And honestly, do you think my asking for that something in return will make it look bad?"

Angelle asked.

"Not really. Not asking anything in return will look much more suspicious in fact, to both the GHP and our own supporters. On the GHP side, they may start suspecting Jenelle of selling out, threatening her already weak leadership, undermining the whole deal. In our camp, the fact that we get something too makes everyone more comfortable with the deal. And that something is not small, remember. I'm sure everyone will understand that the status and clout of the first-elected Cultural Royal will advance our cause a long way, and will be made all the more powerful combined with our control over Jenelle," Natalie said.

This eased Angelle's mind a bit. Logically, this was both the best deal for herself and the best deal for her party and cause. Letting Jenelle be

the new Chairwoman but using Team Angelle's votes to control her from behind would be a much better strategy than going for the Council Chair herself and risking being the common enemy in this fractured Council. Asking something in return only makes the deal less suspicious. But the fact that all this would also be the route to provide Angelle with her lifelong ambition, the status of Cultural Royalty, still made her fear any accusations of putting self interest before the common good.

Nobody could know they were here, so it had to be quick. Of course, nobody was likely to know, since this was the dorm room of a mutually trusted friend, on the quiet top floor, no less. But still, they knew they had to be careful.

"So all my people will nominate you to be Cultural Royalty by the deadline at lunchtime today, and you'll receive your email notice early this afternoon. In return, this evening your people will vote as a bloc for me to be the new Chair," Jenelle said.

"It's also all the other minor parties and independents that we've been able to include in our deal too, so it's not just my people and your people technically. But yes, that's the deal we discussed last week. You have my word for it," Angelle said.

"Your word? How can I trust that? How can I know you won't just vote yourself into the Chair instead once you've secure the nominations, so you'll have both things?" Jenelle said.

"You know, in politics, reputation is everything. For a Cultural Royal, reputation is even more important. If I break my promise, you can simply go out and tell the media about it, and it

will sink my career for good. Why would I do that?" Angelle said.

Jenelle thought for a while.

"You know, maybe we should put the past behind us. Honestly, I don't hate you anymore. You are a worthy adversary, but that doesn't mean we can't form alliances sometimes too. In politics, there are no permanent friends or enemies, after all," she said.

"You know, I've never actually hated you. I'm glad you're now mature enough to understand that politics is about much more important things than personal likes or dislikes," Angelle said.

"I guess we're not teenagers anymore," Jenelle said.

"Agreed. But for the sake of getting this thing done smoothly, I need you and your people to keep up the usual show running for the rest of today at least," Angelle said.

"We'll keep the show running, of course. And it won't just be for today. I sense that we have to pretend to be arch enemies for a little longer, just to keep self interests or extremism from being too excited and spoil everything," Jenelle said.

"Agreed," Angelle said.

Angelle and her team of 40 walked triumphantly to the pick-up point after classes. In her hand was the new banner for the party, still purple and yellow, but bearing their new name, 'Unity in Liberty'. The notice of receiving 84 nominations for Cultural Royalty that she had received just two hours ago sure did help her confidence, even though it was something she had expected anyway.

"Here comes the late MHC again. It looks like they have ditched the stupid Princess brand, but guess what, your new name sucks just as much!" Jenelle shouted, perhaps a bit too deliberately loudly, as Team Angelle approached.

"Be careful. If I were you, I would try to get along with the incoming Chairwoman. We've got at least 60 votes locked in so Angelle will definitely win this time," Natalie yelled back.

"Who knows? Maybe someone else out there has more," Jenelle said.

"It looks like all the conservative forces are still with Jenelle, and Jenelle still hates Angelle. I think we can win," Angelle overheard a CTE member whispered to another.

The ride to Heirs Council surely looks very familiar to Angelle now. The ride does feel a little different today though, and not just because she was on a big bus of more than 40 seats. Something important, and quite exciting, was about to happen, and you could feel the tension in the air.

Angelle led her team off the bus, to be greeted by a smartly dressed young man.

"I guess you're going to lead us to our new seats? By the way, I'm Angelle, leader of Unity in Liberty, and this is Natalie, my deputy, and the rest of the team," Angelle said.

"And a team of 40 too, I'm so honoured to be your host tonight! By the way, my name is Mack," he said.

"So Mack, where has the King assigned us to sit this year?" Natalie asked, as they walked.

"He's just changed it to alphabetical order this time," Mack said.

Angelle was relieved to hear. One less thing to care about.

"By the way, Angelle's running for Chairwoman, right?" Mack asked.

"I don't know, we haven't discussed it. I guess it's her choice," Natalie said.

"You're running, right, Angelle?" Mack asked Angelle.

"I'm sorry, I'm not supposed to discuss this matter in this context. You know, I'll be disqualified if I did," Angelle said.

"So you're running," Mack said.

"I never said that," Angelle said.

Chapter 3

The Maiden Speech

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen. Welcome back to Heirs Council! My name is Jack, I'm the chief secretary of the Heirs Council Clerks, but I'm not your new Chairman, don't worry. As you know, as former Chairman Peter Waters lost his seat in last year's elections, we don't have a Chair right now, so our first order of business is to elect a Chair. The inauguration of new Royals will take place afterwards, because a Chair's discretion is required for that task, even though I need to remind everybody that the discretion is ceremonial only and the five people with the most nominations will as a rule be crowned," Jack announced.

"Tonight, we have two candidates for Chairperson, Jenelle Lacey representing the Grand Heritage Party, and Nadia Leah

representing Change The Era. Without delay, I invite Miss Lacey to take the stage to make her case for election."

There was gasps around the room, followed by loud chatter. They were surprised that Angelle was not running. Previously, everyone had thought it would be between Angelle and Nadia. This expectation also meant nobody else thought they had a chance, so nobody else nominated. Everything was going to plan, Angelle thought.

Angelle turned to address her team.

"So, as leader, who do you advise we vote for?" Natalie asked, already knowing the answer.

"Why didn't you run yourself?" Katie asked, also knowing the answer, but doing it for the benefit of the newer team members who don't know the arrangement.

"As you can see, this is a fractured and divided Council, and it's risky to put yourself out there, as you can become the common enemy. It would be much better to have one of these two clowns take the poisoned chalice. As for which clown should have it, I vote Jenelle. Because right now, CTE is our main enemy, and we don't want to give them any edge in any sense. Besides, it will set up Jenelle and the GHP as CTE's main enemies for this term, meaning they have less time to attack us," Angelle said. "Any other opinions?"

The team agreed in unison.

"The results are in," Jack announced, after reappearing on stage. "There were a lot of blank ballots, but as per the rules, the

candidate with the most valid ballots win.
Candidate Leah, 39%, Candidate Lacey, 61%. I
hereby announce that Jenelle Lacey is the new
Chairwoman of Heirs Council. And with that, my
duty today is done. I should hand over to your
new Chairwoman,"

There were both cheers and boos, but mostly
boos. Angelle instructed her team to join in the
booing, as part of the 'show'.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen, I am
honoured to be your new Chairwoman," Jenelle
said, as the booing continued.

"My first order of business is to inaugurate new
Cultural Royals, the Class of 2013. As per usual
practice, I have used my ceremonial discretion
to select five new Cultural Royals from the
many nominations. Your new Royals are, in

order of selection, Princess Angelle of House Easterner, Prince Luke of House Blueboard, Princess Rosie of House London, Prince Martin of House Roy, and Princess Lisa of House Lee. I welcome them on stage for the crowning."

As Angelle walked towards the stage, she almost cried. She had worked so hard for this, for the past ten years. But she knew that this was just the beginning. A Cultural Princess has to act like a real Princess and serve the community accordingly. Angelle knew that her real work had only just begun.

"As per our tradition, the new Cultural Royals will each give a Maiden Speech as part of their induction, to let them tell the world what they intend to use their new status for. The

speeches are to be scheduled over the next few meetings, to be held where time permits, and in order of selection. As we still have plenty of time remaining today, I think we should begin the speeches. So let me invite Princess Angelle to the stage again!" Jenelle announced.

Angelle walked up the stage again, and shook Jenelle's hand before taking the microphone. They smiled briefly at each other, in a 'mission accomplished' kind of way.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

I am honoured to be selected as a Cultural Princess. You can have trust in me that I will use my position to serve our community.

I am a big fan of the idea of unity in liberty. In fact, this is the new name of our party, as approved by the whole team, as it is the clearest statement of our mission. I will work for a society where we bring people together to solve our collective problems, and uphold the liberty of each individual to pursue their vision otherwise. In fact, I also believe that as a society we should provide adequate opportunities for everyone to become their best in life, this is one important aspect of liberty that is often forgotten. Through all this, we can achieve unity in liberty.

We need unity because, to achieve progress, it is vital that we bring people together. Right now, in both the UK and New Zealand, conservatives, moderates and progressives alike are working to progress the issue of marriage equality, which looks set to be achieved later this year in both countries. On the other hand, a picture of divisiveness, a state

of culture war between so-called progressives and so-called conservatives, have hampered moves towards the same reform in countries like the US and Australia. It's clear which model Pacificland should follow. As responsible adults, we should recognise that we are not kids anymore, and to serve the best interests of our society and indeed our world, we need to stop the bickering and pointless rivalry and come together in rational discussion. When you've experienced enough of this world and its political shifts, you realise that there are in fact very few people in this world that you can never work with, that you can be sure will never be helpful to you one day.

We also need liberty because we are all equal, in a moral sense. We are all morally imperfect, and we can all make important moral contributions on the other hand. To limit the moral agency of another human being is potentially to force another into immoral

behaviour, and therefore something we should refrain from. I believe that in a free market of ideas, the best will ultimately win out.

Moreover, the only sustainable unity that we can have is in liberty. If we allow some people's beliefs to override others', there will never be peace for long. On the other hand, in a system that we agree to sometimes disagree and let everyone have space to follow their own moral compasses, we can nevertheless unite to both solve our collective issues, and also to protect liberty itself.

In today's rapidly changing world, there is often too much cultural and ideological tribalism, where people of a certain group just blindly follow their group, and fight against other groups in cultural and identity type battles. This phenomenon is most clearly seen in identity politics, but is not even limited to that area. With unity in liberty, I offer something different: where a strong culture of liberty for

all means an end to such tribalism, and in turn allow us to come together as one society defending liberty and equal opportunity strongly, negating the need for identity politics.

Once again, I am humbled by the huge responsibility now placed upon me, and I will work hard to bring my values to fruition, making Pacificland and the world a better place in the process."

There were both cheers and booing, and Angelle could make out that the loudest boos have come from the CTE area. No surprises there, she thought.

Chapter 4

Angelle's First Endorsement

"I wish to announce that I will soon publicly endorse the Ramstown bid for the throne, by the way," Angelle told her team.

"But do we really need to take sides? And should we actually do so, strategically?" Mandel asked.

"First of all, it's me who is taking sides, not all of you. Unity in Liberty remains neutral in this year's election, but I myself, as a Cultural Princess, have decided to give my endorsement to Senator Ramstown's bid to become our new King," Angelle explained.

"But why would you have to take sides, anyway? Isn't it risky?" Jordan asked.

"Every decision in politics comes with certain risks, and trying to stay away from risk all the time won't work either. As a new Cultural

Princess, being the first Cultural Royal to give an endorsement in a national election will certainly help my profile. It will also be a good chance to highlight the many things that I agree with Ramstown on, like the need to provide our youth with better educational opportunities, the need to increase welfare payments to liveable levels, and the need to legislate for marriage equality as a priority," Angelle said.

"But would you be forced to then agree with him on everything else?" Jordan asked.

"I don't think so. An endorsement basically just means he is better than the other guy and can be given on a number of limited grounds, it doesn't have to mean total agreement. Past Cultural Royalty endorsements have often left space for substantial disagreements in policy," Angelle said.

As Angelle walked into the Pacificland Press Club Building to make her speech, reporters were already waiting outside with their cameras and microphones. Angelle suddenly realised how much more important she had now become. In fact, all this attention was beginning to make her feel uneasy.

"Are you giving your endorsement to a candidate today?" one reporter asked.

"Well, you'll find out soon," Angelle said.

"Is it true that you hate King Jashor?" another reporter asked.

"I don't hate anybody. But I've really got to go now, as I'm already running late," Angelle said, as she made a dash to the right to break free from the reporters.

As soon as she got inside, Angelle was received by a staff member, who took her up to level five, where press conferences are usually held.

"Are you nervous?" he asked.

"Maybe a bit," Angelle said.

"You know it's normal to feel a bit nervous. It's your first press conference, after all," he said.

It almost felt surreal, as Angelle stepped into the press conference area. She had seen this place on television so many times throughout her life, and now she was there. The royal blue curtain, the wooden stage, the rows of chairs where the reporters sat, everything looked so familiar. Yet it all looked a bit different, now that she was seeing the whole place in real life, from a different perspective than the one shown on TV. The whole room was definitely smaller than she had always imagined it to be.

Angelle took her place at the center of the stage.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

Today I am announcing my endorsement of Senator John Ramstown in his bid to run for election as our new King.

In three months' time our nation will make a very important decision. To stick with King Jashor, or to elect a new King, and if we are to elect a new King, who to get behind.

Firstly, I must say that I have no ill feelings towards King Jashor. However, I do not agree with many of his policies. Opinion polls have also shown that his policies, which have stayed mostly the same since the beginning of his reign

a decade ago, have lost majority support in recent years. In the past decade, much of the world including many Pacificlanders have become much more forward looking, regarding a wide range of issues, including the need to provide better opportunities for our young and our disadvantaged, the need to invest in computer and internet related infrastructure to meet new demands, and the need to seriously address the rights of long suffering minorities, such as in marriage equality. The King is a conservative man, and he apparently does not want to change his mind. I believe his refusal to let Pacificland evolve, even in the face of rapidly changing global situations and attitudes, means that Pacificland will become a backwater where its citizens no longer enjoy the freedom and opportunities people can soon take for granted in other developed nations. It is for this reason, and this reason alone, that I believe we need a change in leadership.

As to which candidate we should get behind, I think we should all get behind the candidate who will address the aforementioned issues and who has the best chance of winning the race. While many candidates are serious about progressing a variety of issues, it looks like this year it will mainly come down to a two-horse race between King Jashor and Senator Ramstown. It is therefore my belief that the best path forward to get the progress many of us want will be to get behind Senator Ramstown together.

I have time for two questions."

There was a brief pause.

"Princess Angelle, I know you have been a long term supporter of gay marriage. Is your decision to endorse the defeat of King Jashor to

do with this issue mostly? And if so, don't you think you're paying too much attention to a side dish?" a reporter asked.

"I never endorse anybody based on one policy alone. My endorsement is for the overall benefit of our nation and its future. However, I also don't agree with the characterisation of marriage equality as a side dish, and many people of my generation both in this country and overseas would agree with me. Equal civil rights before the law is something we should uphold keenly, and the attitude of seeing it as a side dish is frankly offensive. Unfortunately, you are definitely not alone in thinking this way. Plenty of commentators both here and overseas have described marriage equality as nothing more than a distraction from so-called more important issues, and it's time those of us who disagree spoke up," Angelle said.

"So you're telling people to get behind Senator Ramstown, just because he's the front-runner at the moment? Shouldn't it be a fair race, let the best guy win?" another reporter asked.

"I am doing what I think is best for the nation, others can agree with me or decide otherwise. But here's my plea to all of you: everybody out there who wants change, please come together and find a way forward together, and don't let our energy splinter in a dozen different directions," Angelle said.

It has been just two days since Angelle's endorsement of Ramstown, but right now there's trouble for both of them. A viral video, likely made by people associated with CTE, is spreading on the internet. It alleges that

Angelle only became a Cultural Princess because she agreed to be a lap dog of Jenelle's, and by extension, because Angelle endorses Ramstown and Jenelle endorses Jashor, they are effectively one and the same.

"I have to right this wrong, if only to be fair to Ramstown, whatever the price to myself," Angelle declared.

"But what exactly are you going to do? There are so many things you can do to make it worse for both of you," Natalie said.

Angelle thought for a while.

"You do have a point. So what do you think I should do?" Angelle asked.

"I guess we can start safely, by publicly demanding a chance to clarify this matter with CTE," Natalie said.

Chapter 5

Two People, Three Questions

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to another episode of Two People, Three Questions, where we invite two polar opposites and let our audience come up with three questions for them to answer.

Tonight is a special episode. Heirs Council based political party Change The Era has been associated with recent accusations that newly elected Cultural Princess Angelle Easterner got her position after doing a deal with her traditional enemy, the newly elected Heirs Council Chairwoman Jenelle Lacey. Princess Angelle has since been demanding a chance to publicly clarify the matter with those accusing her, and we've decided to get her what she wants. So tonight we have Princess Angelle of

House Easterner, together with Change The Era leader Nadia Leah.

Let's go to the first question."

"You both say that you are interested in progress for our society, and now you are at each other's throats, even as Jashor is regaining ground in the polls. Why should we trust either of you?" an audience member stood up and asked.

"Thank you for your question. As you mentioned, Jashor is in front in the polls again, and it's thanks to people like Change The Era, who are smearing his only serious opposition. I don't know why they are doing this, but Change The Era is effectively acting as a friend of Jashor, which is why they shouldn't be trusted. As for Senator Ramstown and myself, we only

want what's best for our future, which is also what the people of Pacificland want for our future. Think about this: a Ramstown administration will see us moving in the right direction straight away, but Change The Era wants to prevent this from happening," Angelle said.

"Well, you can always trust Change The Era, as we always stand up for justice. Unlike Princess Angelle, who has sold out her values to become a Princess. And we've just proven to you that Jashor and Ramstown are not that different, so Jashor regaining in the polls is not the most important thing. The most important thing is to get behind the people really fighting for progress, and that's us, and to avoid the trap of business as usual masquerading as progress, and that's Angelle and Ramstown," Nadia said.

"Unlimited funding for university places, marriage equality within three months, and doubling pensions, and you call that business as usual?" Angelle asked.

"There are still plenty of things that are not good enough..." Nadia said.

"Well, let's get back on track. Let's go to the second question," the host said.

"This whole fight seems to be about Princess Angelle's endorsement of Candidate Ramstown. So let's focus a bit there. Why do you think Ramstown being King is a good idea, Princess, and why do you think it's not a good idea, Miss Leah?" another audience member asked.

"As I've said many times before, a Ramstown administration will move us forward in the right direction immediately. Even if things don't change overnight, we will be making plenty of progress. Unlimited funding for university places, marriage equality within three months, and doubling pensions, these are all just the beginning. There will also be a program to upgrade our computer and internet infrastructure, a review to identify new national parks that should be declared, and more. It really is an opportunity that's too good to miss," Angelle said.

"Change The Era has decided that we will endorse Candidate Sumon, because he stands for making society the wonderful place it should be. A Sumon administration will make university free, legislate that everyone must accept marriage equality rather than just the government allowing it, and they will also double the pensions and build new

infrastructure, so in every way he either equals or exceeds Ramstown's offers. And then, unlike Ramstown, Sumon will also take in a hundred thousand refugees per year, sue companies that don't have enough female directors, remove culturally appropriating art from our museums, set a code of acceptable speech for parliament and universities to protect our minorities from hate speech, and so on. Things that people like Ramstown are too scared to do, because they offend the status quo. But offend the status quo we must, if we are to have a wonderful and just society," Nadia said.

"But don't you notice that Candidate Sumon isn't doing too well in the polls? He cannot bring people together to create a mandate for change, instead he alienates people left, right and center. I appreciate his idealism, but his authoritarian policies are causing people to run scared. His campaign is dividing the country more than anything," Angelle said.

"That's because people with vested self interests and bigots don't want change generally. It's not his fault," Nadia said.

"Change is a process of compromise, and I agree that vested interests are a sad thing. I'm sure Candidate Ramstown feels the same way, as he tries to get the best deal for all of us. But as it stands, every vote for Candidate Sumon is a vote wasted, that could have otherwise caused change if it went to Candidate Ramstown. So isn't this helping Jashor, more than anything?" Angelle asked.

"The ends, to depose of Jashor in this case, do not justify the means. Jashor will get deposed of sooner or later, but it's not right to endorse someone like Ramstown, who won't make

society wonderful enough. We cannot legitimise a lesser evil," Nadia said.

"That sounds like my way or the highway. As a responsible Princess who wants the best for her people, I cannot help but think about how many will miss out on much needed progress, because of your attitude," Angelle said.

"Well, we're running out of time. Let's go to our final question," the host said.

"My question goes back to the very reason we're here tonight. Princess, did you do a deal with Chairwoman Lacey, and if so, why do you think it's justified? On the other hand, Miss Leah, what evidence exactly do you have that there is a deal between Angelle and Jenelle, and what exactly do you know about it?"

"I do everything after careful consideration, for the best outcomes. In the case of Heirs Council, yes I did vote for Jenelle, and also directed my party members to do so. This is because, out of the two candidates, I thought she would make the less worse Chair. I did discuss with Jenelle beforehand of my decision, as I generally do in similar circumstances, so make whatever you want to out of this. But the fact is, I cannot allow someone like Nadia Leah, who thinks that people should wait for so-called real justice to come while suffering injustice without end, to use the Chair of the Heirs Council to legitimise their stance. That was the basis of my decision," Angelle said.

"What we know is that Angelle would have the numbers to win if she ran, but she chose to support Jenelle instead. That is evidence enough of a deal for me, and for many people.

The real mystery is why you did not run, and you aren't addressing that," Nadia said.

"I didn't run because it wouldn't have been in the best interests of my party," Angelle said.

"Look me in the eyes, and tell me, did you do a deal or not?" Nadia asked.

"Well, I of course bargained for the best position for my party as a condition of support, as is a leader's duty. You may call it a deal if you wish. I am also not at liberty to reveal the terms of any bargain. But the fact that I continue to support what I've always supported shows that I haven't become a lap dog of anybody. In fact, I can tell you that in 2006 CTE wanted to make a deal with us, and we refused. But it wouldn't have made CTE a lap dog of ours if we agreed, right? We all make our offers to work together,

and that doesn't mean anyone has to sell out their values.

"But let me put it this way. If I struck a deal with you instead, you wouldn't be complaining, right? I could have struck a deal with you instead, and I didn't. Why? Because I always do what I think would be best for our future. And that was keeping you out of the Chair. Because I couldn't run myself, Jenelle was the lesser evil," Angelle said.

Chapter 6

A Conversation

"You may think this is the way to real progress, but it's really a trap. Yes. Rather than providing a path to real progress, going for Candidate Ramstown this election will doom our momentum towards real progress, in exchange for some consolation prizes.

In fact, the point of Ramstown's candidacy is to keep real progressive ideas out of government. No, this is not a conspiracy theory. In fact, one of Ramstown's biggest supporters, Princess Angelle, has openly stated that this is her intention.

'In fact, I can tell you that in 2006 CTE wanted to make a deal with us, and we refused.'

'I could have struck a deal with you instead, and I didn't. Why? Because I always do what I think would be best for our future. And that was keeping you out of the Chair. Because I couldn't run myself, Jenelle was the lesser evil.'

Don't fall for this trap. Support real progressives this election. And if Jashor wins again, at least we've sent the likes of Ramstown a strong message, that it's real progress or bust.

Make no mistake. We don't want the crumbs from your table. We'd rather wait for what we deserve."

Angelle was so angry that she turned off the TV instantly. She was still surprised that this advertisement had been allowed to run for a

week now. Didn't the electoral laws prohibit blatant slander like this?

The pouring rain really didn't help. Angelle was already both tired and feeling bad. Tired because she had travelled all the way across town after classes, just to make this apology, and feeling bad because she felt that it was mostly her fault that Ramstown was going to lose tomorrow.

As Angelle entered the front of Ramstown's electoral office, her heart felt heavy. What was he going to say, she wondered. Was he going to be angry? If so, he did have a right to be. These thoughts kept swirling in her mind, as she waited for her appointment.

"The senator is ready to see you," the receptionist finally said, after what seemed like an eternity.

The receptionist led Angelle through the office, and into a room at the back of the office, where Ramstown was waiting.

Angelle sat down, facing Ramstown, as the receptionist closed the door and left them alone.

"Good evening, Princess, I am Senator Ramstown. I am of the impression that there is something you want to talk to me about?" he said.

"I just came here to say sorry. I am very sorry for wrecking your campaign, for destroying

your chances. Next time you run, I will keep my mouth shut, I promise," Angelle said.

Ramstown thought for a while, but did not appear upset at all.

"First of all, there isn't going to be a next time. Once a candidate loses, he should let someone else, someone fresh have a go, for the sake of the common good. It shouldn't be about any one of us personally, anyway. We are all servants of the greater good. Second of all, please don't think it's your fault. Something like this was always likely to happen. I took a chance that it wouldn't, but it was always more likely that it would," Ramstown said.

"What do you mean?" Angelle asked.

"You know, the people behind Change The Era were hellbent on getting Jashor his landslide victory, using whatever means. If you didn't

come into the story, they would just have used another reason. In fact, many of those who are personally more keen on being King than myself have decided to stay out of the game for now and wait until CTE burns out. I've only decided to run because, well, tough as the situation is, we've got to try something," he said.

"So, so you're not angry at me?" she asked.

"Of course not. In fact, I'm sure nothing you did changed the outcome. The relevant unknown was always whether the people behind CTE are well organised enough and persuasive enough, to get enough people to be willing to put off change," he said.

"I don't understand," she said.

"I see, I see. You don't really know what we're up against at all. Let me tell you then. Now, promise me you won't tell anyone that this came from me," he said.

"I promise," she said.

"You see, CTE aren't really who they say they are, and don't really want what they say they want. The people behind CTE, I know them well actually. I have known them since my Royal College days," he said.

"But that's impossible. Nadia Leah and the rest of the leadership are all around my age," she said.

"You see, Ms Leah and the rest are nothing but puppets, but even they aren't supposed to know it. CTE is, in fact, run by a bunch of old people my age. They have always had this agenda of revolution. They believe in a revolutionary change, resulting in an authoritarian government that will implement their utopian agenda. They also believe that any smaller progress is not worth it, and can only be a distraction to their grand plan. So they will raise the expectations of young people, while they keep conservative governments like Jashor's running. They believe the resulting frustration will mean that a critical

mass of people in society will one day accept their revolutionary proposal, and vote them into power accordingly," he said.

Angelle took some time to absorb it all. She couldn't believe what she was hearing.

"But CTE only exists as a party in the Heirs Council," she said.

"Yes, that's true, for the time being. They are building their base among young people, for now," he said.

"Why would they do that?" she asked.

"The authoritarian radicals believe that young people is where they will make the most inroads, for several reasons. Firstly, both here and internationally, the young people today are the most progressive cohort since the 1970s, and they are very frustrated about the past

three or four decades of relative conservatism. This makes them receptive to radical ideas. Secondly, young people generally haven't seen first hand how social change is made, step-by-step, and don't know the value of gradual progress and compromise. They are less likely to have faith in the ability of rational discussion and persuasion to change social attitudes. Therefore, they are more able to be persuaded against the effectiveness of the liberal enlightenment values of freedom, rational debate and gradual but effective progress as a result," he said.

"But you said that the authoritarian radicals are old people. They surely would know the value of freedom, rational debate and gradual progress?" Angelle asked.

"I guess it's something they've believed in since they were young and naive, and they just can't let go of it emotionally. Or maybe they haven't opened their eyes enough to see the changes in the past several decades and how they have

come about. I guess some people never evolve from the ideals of their youth, even if evidence says they were misguided," he said.

Angelle paused again, to process it all.

"There's something else I want to ask you. Since CTE is already using me to destroy other people's election campaigns, am I already being a burden on the common good?" she asked.

"Well, that's a question only you can answer yourself. I don't know Heirs Council politics that well, really. But as a general principle, strategically you should put the least controversial people on the front line, so to say, to minimise any weakness you may have," he said.

"Who told you all that?" Natalie asked.

"I can't give you any names. I swore to keep it secret. But it was an authoritative source," Angelle said.

"So what are we going to do now?" Natalie asked.

"I am going to resign from the party leadership and from Heirs Council, even though I will still be available for advice. You will lead the party and continue to bring people together the way I did. You should also use our new knowledge of the CTE in your leadership, but don't share it with too many people for now," Angelle said.

"You can't resign. We need you," Natalie said.

"As a general principle, strategically we should put the least controversial people on the front line, to minimise any weakness we may have, especially in these important times. You were

always the brains behind the party, you can do it," Angelle said.

"I'll do my best, I promise," Natalie said.

"And one more thing," Angelle said.

"What?" Natalie asked.

"You should challenge Jenelle for the Chair at the next meeting. Whether you get it or not, at least this will help put CTE's accusations behind us," Angelle said.

Chapter 7

Graduation Day

They say that graduation day, especially at Royal College, should be a proud occasion for everyone. But right now, for Angelle, this day is anything but proud. She was still feeling guilty about the recent national elections, for one. Despite what Ramstown had told her, she couldn't help but think of what might have been, if not for her 'role'. When Jashor delivered the opening speech at the graduation ceremony, she couldn't help but feel guilty. Jashor may no longer be King, if not for her, after all. Now that the ceremony is over, she really couldn't wait to leave.

"Hey Angelle," Jenelle said, coming towards her.

The sight of Jenelle made Angelle feel even worse. Should she have told Natalie to challenge for the Chair of the Council? Was that really the right thing to do? Couldn't she have just kept her promise this once? She had tried to avoid thinking of how bad Jenelle must have been feeling, having to sit and listen to Natalie deliver the Heirs Council speech at the ceremony, when she had expected all year that this would be her moment. But there was no avoiding it now.

"I'm sorry," Angelle said, not knowing what else to say.

"What are you sorry for?" Jenelle asked.

"I'm not going to hide it. I suggested to Natalie that she challenge for the Chair, to put all the rumours behind us," Angelle said.

"You really think I would feel bad for not giving that speech? Let Natalie have it, this may be

her biggest moment of all time. But for me, I will have many bigger and better opportunities. I really couldn't care less," Jenelle said.

"Really? You're not angry at me?" Angelle said.

"To say the truth, I was a bit upset when you caused me to lose the GHP leadership, as a result of losing the Chair. But then I realised that the GHP were all just self-important Jashor lackeys, and I didn't want to be a part of that anyway. I've been so much happier ever since becoming an independent. In a way, you gave me the best gift ever," Jenelle said.

"And you're not just saying this to make me feel better?" Angelle said.

"Why would I? I've never wanted to make you feel good, right?" Jenelle said.

"But today's graduation day," Angelle said.

"I don't make any such exceptions from my policy of always telling the truth," Jenelle said.

Angelle went back inside to join Natalie and her group. She felt that she had to at least say goodbye to them properly.

"Hi Natalie," Angelle said.

"Hey Angelle," Natalie said. "Haven't talked to you all day. Where have you been?"

"I've been around," Angelle said.

"You look sad. Is anything wrong?" Katie asked.

"I'm sorry to have ruined everything for everybody," Angelle said.

"Why?" Jenny asked.

"I'm sorry for my role in keeping Jashor as King, for one, and for making things so awkward for all of you, for two," Angelle said.

"Well, firstly, CTE decided to do their best to help Jashor, and that was none of your fault. I

guess we'll need to defeat the Jashor-CTE alliance in three years' time, and we'll definitely need your help again. Secondly, nothing's awkward for anyone here," Jordan said.

"No, I mean Heirs Council and the whole situation there," Angelle said.

"Heirs Council? I'll have to say that you're the best thing that's ever happened to that stuffy, old place ever. We're all in there only because of you, and now they are saying that Natalie is the most respected Chairperson in decades, because she's willing to stand for something, against the old vested interests. All of this wouldn't have happened if not for you," Katie said.

"You really need to be prouder of yourself. Look at all of us. You were the key ingredient that brought us together. As for Jashor, a Princess never gives up, right? What's three more years in the whole scheme of history?" Natalie said.

Somehow, not even this was able to cheer Angelle up.

Chapter 8

Because of Jashor

Angelle was sitting alone in a cafeteria, somewhere in the city. Besides writing her novel, which she was doing now on her computer, she doesn't have much to look forward to these days. Life without College and without Heirs Council seems very empty indeed, and her entry level job really doesn't interest her much. The dire social and political situation in this country is making her angry and sad all the time, and she has been unable to do much about it.

"Now that Ireland and the whole of the US have marriage equality too, why don't we have it too?" someone near her asked.

"Because they don't have Jashor, and when you have Jashor, you can't have nice things?" their friend replied.

Here we go again, Angelle thought. That the pro-equality side in Ireland had to work hard in the recent referendum to win their rights, or that the US Supreme Court decision only came after lots of hard work, don't seem to matter to these people. Only that they don't have Jashor. In fact, in Pacificland in 2015, it seems that everyone can just blame Jashor for everything that goes wrong, without having to do anything to help bring about change themselves. The answer for everything that's wrong seems to just be 'because of Jashor'. Otherwise, they expect change to be delivered to them on a silver platter, when Jashor finally leaves. Which is, somewhere in the indefinite future.

"Hi Angelle," Natalie said.

"Hi Natalie," Angelle said, having almost forgotten why she was in the cafeteria in the first place. Apparently Natalie had invited her to this appointment, and had something to say. What it was, she didn't know.

"The others are coming in about half an hour," Natalie said.

"There are others?" Angelle asked.

"Of course. The whole team is coming," Natalie said.

"So what is it that you want to tell me?" Angelle asked.

"I'll put it this way. We think you need a cause to fight for," Natalie said.

"What cause?" Angelle asked.

"Well, just a cause. You like to work to better society, you like to work for liberty, to bring people together, if my memory serves me right. You are also particularly passionate about marriage equality, a cause whose time has come but politics has frustrated in this country. And in the two years since our graduation, you haven't had a real fight in any of these areas. Isn't it time you put on your armour again?" Natalie asked.

"How can I fight, if nobody is willing to join me? All I even hear is 'because of Jashor', on every topic, everywhere I go. In fact, I literally just heard it again ten minutes ago, in relation to why we still don't have marriage equality," Angelle said.

"So why do you think this is happening?" Natalie said.

"Of course, it's because the likes of CTE are teaching people to think in this way. Not that I

can change that, they have heaps of funding and I don't," Angelle said.

"So what do you think would need to happen for things to change?" Natalie asked Angelle.

"The only route I see is to have Jashor removed, by having him defeated in next year's election," Angelle said.

"So would you say we support one candidate for that election, out of those available?" Natalie asked.

"The trouble is that, they are all uninspiring, and can't win. I would pick the one most likely to win, but that person just isn't there. I guess they are all waiting for CTE to burn out before they would run, maybe in five or nine years' time, to avoid suffering Ramstown's fate themselves," Angelle said.

"I guess you're right. But would you just give up there?" Natalie asked.

"I would hate to give up just like that, but what else can I do? It's what is making me sad and angry almost every day, in fact," Angelle said.

"Let me put it this way: if none of the candidates are suitable for your backing, why don't you run yourself?" Natalie asked.

"Me? Are you crazy?" Angelle asked.

"Of course not! Where's that Angelle that I used to know, the 14-year-old who ran for Heirs Council, when the odds were totally against her? Where's the Princess who would never give up, despite what people may say?" Natalie said.

"But you need funds to run for the top job," Angelle said.

"You know, we've been raising a fighting fund for you these past two years," Natalie said.

Angelle brightened up. "Really?"

"Of course. Make no mistake. You're our only hope now," Natalie said. "I have to say though, many people who care about our future have pitched in, including Senator Ramstown. In fact, I have a note from him, just for you. I don't understand it, but maybe you will."

Angelle took the folded note, and began reading.

"Remember our conversation in 2013? Nobody's going to put their hand up this time, so I agree you'll have to try. At the very least it will dampen both Jashor and CTE quite a lot."

At that moment, the others came into the cafeteria. Katie, Jordan, Mandel, Jenny, Angelle saw them approach, one by one.

And then, there was Jenelle.

"You know, you're our only hope now. You need to run for Queen in 2016, because otherwise Jashor will have a historical landslide," Mandel said.

"I beg you to take up this offer. We will support you, all the way, remember. It will be just like when we were in school," Katie said.

"You really need to run. There's no good alternative," Jenelle said.

"Wait. Don't you support Jashor? Why would you want me to ruin his landslide?" Angelle said.

"You know, people grow up. When I was younger my parents had me convinced that Jashor was right. But I don't think so now. He

really is an authoritarian pretending to be a libertarian, and I can't stand that," Jenelle said.

"But when I run, I will run strongly on marriage equality. Will you be okay with that?" Angelle said.

"Why wouldn't I? Everyone supports marriage equality now. Do I look like such a dinosaur to you?" Jenelle said.

"I don't know. In the past you were against it," Angelle said.

"In the distant past, like in the year 2000, I understand you were against it too. Does that mean anything?" Jenelle said.

"The people need their Princess to act, and act fast, you know," Natalie said.

Angelle thought for a while.

"Okay, I will run. But on one condition," Angelle said.

"What's that?" Natalie asked.

"When I run, I run to win, not just to prevent the worst. If you're in this with me, we'll all work to win," Angelle said.

Chapter 9

Angelle's Vision

This night had been almost one year in the making, but it still seems surreal to Angelle, now that it's finally happening. Until now, nobody, except for Angelle's core supporters, had known of her candidacy. It had to be kept secret until the last minute, to prevent Jashor and CTE pulling sly tricks, perhaps acting concertedly.

As the Pacificland Press Club building came into view, it was a familiar sight to Angelle. Just three years ago she had come here to endorse Ramstown's campaign. It all felt like just yesterday. Three years ago she was surprised by how 'important' she had become. Tonight she will again be the center of attention, but this time it will come as no surprise. Three years ago she was genuinely optimistic that

Ramstown had a good chance of ending Jashor's reign once and for all. Today, she is coming here to do what Ramstown ultimately could not, but to tell the truth she is also less optimistic than back then. Still, a real Princess has to hold her head high, give it her best shot, and not give up easily.

Angelle held her head high and smiled as she stepped out of the car, walking towards the building. Once again, the reporters and their cameras were already waiting outside.

"Princess, are you announcing that you are running for Queen of Pacificland?" one reporter asked.

"You will see," she replied.

"Are you really confident that you have a real chance against King Jashor?" another one asked.

"I'm not entertaining hypotheticals, but I am always confident," Angelle said.

Angelle could also hear a continuous chant of 'traitor Angelle' and 'we'd rather wait than have this witch' somewhere in the background. But she had learned to block that out.

Inside, the whole building looked familiar, just like it had been three years ago. This familiarity was a welcome sight to Angelle. At least it helped calm the nerves.

"Thank you," Angelle told Jade, the woman who had just done her makeup.

"No, we should thank you," Jade said.

"Why?" Angelle asked.

"In these complicated and hopeless times, you are the one voice who can provide some sanity to save us," Jade said.

As Angelle stepped into the press conference area, she could see many big name reporters and journalists already seated. This caused her to be a bit nervous. "Keep calm, and stay focused on the message," she told herself.

Angelle held her head high once again, and proceeded to the podium.

"Good evening ladies and gentlemen,

Today I am announcing my candidacy to run for the throne in the national elections at the end of next month.

To put it simply why I am running, it's because King Jashor has failed the country, and we are in a political depression. Basically, for many people it feels like nothing is right and there is not much hope for the future, sort of like an economic depression, even though the economy is thankfully not in as much trouble as it was a few years ago, thanks to improved conditions internationally. Normally an economic recovery would have generated hope, but this time, too many people simply know that no economic recovery can make up for the sorry state our King has left our society in.

As a relatively privileged member of society, I never used to know how so many people in this

society are struggling. It was not until the Occupy movements that many of us woke up, and found that we simply don't live up to our constitutional responsibility to deliver liberty, opportunity and the right to happiness to all citizens. Since then, many voices, including myself, have called for change, in both social and economic policy, but this has all fell on deaf ears. For the King, the only voices that matter seem to be those close to him, and his team seems to believe that any change is not needed, despite evidence to the contrary.

Many people in our society also have a passion to improve it, simply by speaking up, and letting people know that things need to be improved. I have been educated by many voices, telling me that things really do need to improve, especially regarding our approach to equal rights under the law, and anti-discrimination laws. Unfortunately, the King has also tried to marginalise these voices as much as possible,

by not inviting them to government panels, by using censorship, and even by unduly influencing what should be independent democratic bodies like the Heirs Council. Everything is stacked in favour of the views of himself and his fellow anti-change cronies, while this so-called democratic government is failing the people it should be representing.

In fact, King Jashor is failing even the very people he claims to represent, the traditionalists in society. In recent years, many traditionalists have come to the view that opening up marriage to gay couples is good for both marriage and the gay community, which, even Jashor must face it, is never going back into the closet ever. Some of his ministers have already let him know of their views to this effect, but they have fallen on deaf ears at best, and caused sackings at worst. Of course, poll after poll that show 70% of the population in support have also fallen on deaf ears. Clearly,

the King has put his own views ahead of what the people want, and what's best for society. King Jashor and his undemocratic ways on this issue is a classic example of the dangers of having an authoritarian on the throne.

Some progressives may contend that, as I am running as a progressive alternative to Jashor, I should vow to implement progressive values throughout society and force people to accept such values through government mandate. But don't worry, I will do no such thing. King Jashor has shown that it is bad for everyone ultimately to use government as a tool of authoritarian cultural enforcement. We should not replace one kind of dictatorship with another kind. We should replace authoritarianism with liberty, no qualifications added.

My vision is one where there's liberty and hope for everyone, whether you are rich or poor,

progressive or traditional. That is the only fair way. A King or Queen needs to govern for all, and the only way one can govern for all is to allow everyone their fair share of liberty and moral agency, listen to concerns from every sector of society, and make decisions that are backed up by the will of the people and the interest of society at large. Unlike King Jashor, I will govern for everyone when on the throne, and I will not force my views onto unwilling people, making them suffer.

In fact, I am going to start listening right now. Any of you who have any concerns or ideas you want me to listen to, you are welcome to send in a message to my campaign headquarters."

Chapter 10

Uncovering the Truth

"Ramstown was bad enough, but Queen Angelle? She would be the biggest setback progressives have ever had.

Don't be fooled. Angelle is nothing but a conservative trying to hold back the progressive tide, by offering the same consolation prizes Ramstown tried to offer. We said no thanks last time, and we will say no thanks again this year.

At Real Progress Or Bust, we believe that to compromise is to create injustice. Patience is a virtue, and waiting for real justice is something we are all happy to do. Don't settle for the lesser evil."

Angelle decided to switch off the TV, so she wouldn't see any more of these ads. Three weeks from polling day, and she was still substantially behind, thanks to ads like these.

Private polling obtained by Team Angelle found that they would actually be ahead if not for the CTE effort, called 'Real Progress Or Bust' this year. Basically, they have been out telling people to 'rather wait' and stay home rather than vote for Angelle, who was 'not committed to progressive values and policies', as 'evidenced by her own speech'. All very sad, but none of it a surprise. Meanwhile, Angelle was trying to stay optimistic by answering messages from the public that had come to her campaign headquarters.

Then one message gave her an inspiration:

"Dear Princess Angelle,

I just want you to know how grateful I am that you are truly sympathetic to people like me.

I am a 45-year-old gay man who has been engaged with my partner for ten years, still waiting to marry while getting old quickly. If we have to wait several more years, I really don't know if some of my loved family will live to see our wedding.

Some of the people who call themselves 'progressives' or 'social justice warriors' out there now want to go to great lengths to ensure nobody is hurt by unkind speech, or so they say. Ever since earlier this decade, they have even gone to great lengths to call out anyone who engages in this so-called 'microaggression', and have demanded that any potentially hurtful

speech be hidden behind a 'trigger warning'. Yet many of the same people (at least those who live here in Pacificland) have said loudly and clearly that it is better to wait four more years to let people like me get married, so that we can get so-called real progress, as if marriage equality wasn't. Some have even said that it is selfish for people like me to want to get married now, to short change the whole of society by settling for having you as Queen. All this speech is clearly unkind to someone like me, and I wonder why they don't merit a 'trigger warning'. Maybe trigger warnings only apply when it suits their agenda.

Anyway, good luck for your campaign. Stay strong.

Keep the faith,

John."

Angelle's hopelessness turned to anger upon reading this. A real Princess cannot just stand by and do nothing about this: injustice done in the name of so-called justice is the worst injustice ever.

This is it. Nobody can read this and not start to see the caring and idealistic veneer of CTE start cracking.

Angelle did not wait to write back.

"Dear John,

Your message was inspirational, and if more people heard it, the course of our future may be changed.

Can I use your message in a public advertisement?

Yours,
Angelle."

The rest was history, they say.

The very simple question of 'wouldn't it be better to let John get married next year' had caused deep soul searching among those formally committed to the idea of Real Progress or Bust. Less than a week after Angelle released her advertisement featuring John's message, the Real Progress Or Bust movement became

divided, and suspended operations. CTE itself was in crisis, as the membership started to question the teachings and tactics of their 'senior advisors', and many members resigned. Some even joined Angelle's campaign. Angelle's polling rose quickly, and she is now neck-and-neck with Jashor.

Recent events have recovered Angelle's faith in humanity, which had sunk to an all time low just one year ago, the very day she was sitting in that cafeteria waiting for Natalie's unexpected intervention. There are still plenty of people who really care about other people out there, apparently. Of course, there is still Jashor to fight, and being the youngest candidate for the throne in a century won't be easy. There's still a long way to go, and a big fight to be had, but this is already a good place to start.

Chapter 11

A Debate With No Moderator

"Don't worry, you'll do fine," Katie said, as the driver pulled up to the Pacificland Press Club building, a very familiar sight indeed by now. Angelle could see that the whole building had been decorated in blue and green, Pacificland's national colours, in preparation for the National Debate.

"I'm sure I can win the arguments by logic, because Jashor doesn't have much logic anyway. But in politics, everything is about perception, and Jashor is the master of deception in this area," Angelle said.

"Deception can only go so far. The truth will always win, in the end," Natalie said.

As Angelle stepped out of the car, a well-dressed young woman was already waiting to

escort her to the debate. Of course, this is the National Debate, and the whole nation is watching, so everything had to be well prepared. Even now, as Angelle is walking into the building, the cameras are already filming. Showing the two contenders arrive has been a big part of the tradition ever since people had televisions. Angelle was also well aware that this could be historical. In many previous election campaigns, certain things said in the National Debate had become defining issues, often changing the course of the whole campaign.

"The King will be asking all the questions. You just have to answer. It will be like a 'friendly chat', in his own words," the young woman told Angelle.

Angelle was sort of surprised, but not really that surprised. The reigning King always had the ability to set the agenda of the debate. Most

Kings followed convention and assigned fair rules to the debate, but Jashor, the 'ultimate deceptor' as some people call him, has been known to use very unconventional, and arguably unfair, debating formats to his advantage.

"Are you fine with this arrangement?" the young woman asked Angelle.

"Yes," Angelle said, trying to stay confident, knowing that she had no other choice.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, the hard working people of the greatest nation on Earth," Jashor began.

"Today, we are here to continue the great tradition of the National Debate, a most important event that has to be held before each national election. But today, things will also be different. As you can see, I haven't invited a panel to ask questions, as per usual practice. This is because I believe many people don't connect well with the traditional format of the debate. Instead, I have decided to arrange it as an informal, friendly chat, between myself and Princess Angelle. I also believe the new format will allow a closer look at both candidates and the issues, without the distraction of the press gallery establishment, who often do not understand what everyday people are concerned about," Jashor said.

"So let's start. Princess Angelle, I must firstly congratulate you on your determination to run for election, and to serve the people of Pacificland. You must understand that the throne is a most important position and to

occupy it one needs to have both a suitable vision and an ability to carry it out. So why do you think you are more qualified, compared to all the other people out there?" Jashor asked.

"Thank you for your congratulations, your majesty. I have decided to run for election because many people told me, even begged me, they wanted me to run. I have decided to run for election also because I believe I have something to offer, something that Pacificland will miss out upon if I don't run. Something along the lines of liberty and equal opportunity, things that have been eroded in our society in the past few decades. As to if I think I'm more qualified than all other people out there, I really cannot answer this question, as nobody else except myself and your majesty are running in this election, and nobody else has articulated a vision and a plan for our future at this time. All I can say is that, I believe what I have to offer is better than what else is available," Angelle said.

"So you really think that you, a 28-year-old who graduated from Royal College not that long ago, are more qualified than me and my 62 years of experience?" Jashor asked.

"I don't know why you keep using the term qualified, but I believe Pacificland will thrive under my rule, and it wouldn't under your continued rule. Why? Because I respect people. I respect that every individual has their own moral agency, and in a fair society we should all have equal moral agency, because we are all equal before the law as citizens. Also, because I care to listen. The liberty and equal opportunity I'm offering is not just theoretical, but practical. It would be useless to offer a theoretical vision of liberty and opportunity, which in practice would lead to the systematic alienation and loss of moral agency of many people out there. I've listened to the economically and systematically

disadvantaged people out there, and I know that our system needs fixing. While you were busy demonizing Occupy Heirs Council and finding a way to shut it down, I was busy listening to people and engaging with them. While you were busy consulting with your cronies and deciding policy in a 'father knows best' way, I was listening to what people actually want, and designing ways to provide them with that opportunity while also maximising everyone else's liberty," Angelle said.

Chapter 12

My Way or The Highway

"I believe you need to learn a few things about governing, young lady. My advisers are all experts in their field, and have extensive political experience. Simply calling them cronies just shows your lack of understanding. Also, does this mean that, if elected, you are going to fire all these experts, and perhaps appoint your own friends, the most controversial party Heirs Council has ever known, to the advisory posts? If so, I do worry much for our future," Jashor said.

"I have no intention to disrespect the expertise of your advisors, and I agree they are mostly indeed experts. If elected, I will undertake a review of all posts, but I have no doubt that I will keep many of your experts on board. Perhaps I should make myself clearer. I

understand that your advisory council is made up of people who mostly agree with you on everything, or at least have decided to agree with you so they can keep their job. That isn't good representation of the wide range of opinions and voices out there. It appears that you have deliberately made it this way by weeding out people who dissent, so you can keep everything your way. The fact that you think I will just appoint my friends as advisors actually shows the way you think yourself, more than anything," Angelle said.

"Where is the evidence for all that you are accusing me of? Don't think you can just make up anything, young lady. This is not Heirs Council, you know. This is serious," Jashor said.

"Don't you call me 'young lady' anymore, like I know nothing, and don't you disparage Heirs Council, because it is still more democratic than

your government," Angelle almost wanted to say. But she didn't, because that would be taking the bait and allowing Jashor to focus on what he wanted to. Instead, she decided to just ignore the insults and stay focussed on the issues.

"We know that at least five of your advisors have been dismissed in recent years, for trying to convince you to allow marriage equality. We know that there may be more who would have wanted to do so, but now won't because they fear for their jobs. We know that quite a few of your ministers and secretaries are supporters of marriage equality, but are simply afraid to speak up because of your attitude," Angelle said.

"Well, I have always maintained that my government is to be a conservative government, governed by conservative

principles and policies. Those who have somehow changed their minds and decided that conservative governance isn't for them are of course welcome to leave the government," Jashor said.

"But at least three of the dismissed advisors are dedicated conservatives, who presented a conservative case for marriage equality to you. They did not waver from their commitment to conservatism, they merely didn't see its application the same way as yourself. So is it dedication to the King Jashor way rather than dedication to conservatism that you are looking for? Is it simply a case of 'my way or the highway'?" Angelle said.

"Well, I believe that gay marriage simply isn't compatible with real conservatism," Jashor said.

"So we're going by King Jashor's version of conservatism now. So it really is 'my way or the highway'," Angelle said.

"Well, we're going by 'real conservatism', nothing else," Jashor said.

"Not according to the majority of the Young Conservatives Association of Pacificland in an anonymous survey, not according to many prominent conservative commentators around the world, at least. So this is really just King Jashor's version of 'real conservatism'. Still quite 'my way or the highway', isn't it," Angelle said.

Chapter 13

A Passing Fad?

"Let's not focus on gay marriage anyway, most people are not interested in that and are already sick and tired of it. I believe gay marriage will be a passing fad, but real marriage will stand the test of time. Like how my way of governance, true and tested over time, will stand the test of time, but your ideology will just be another passing fad, young lady.

Already, just in the past few weeks, we saw the implosion of the far left movement in this country, where members resigned from their organisation en masse and former allies turned against each other. When you think about it, this tends to happen a lot within movements that are passing fads, and this is indeed how such fads often come to pass. We surely don't want a government losing direction and imploding like that, right? Which is why I would really worry if young lady and her team took

the reins in a month's time. The next four years would surely be rough," Jashor said.

"Well, I have had a great interest in history, and I surely haven't seen that stubbornness, refusal to adapt in light of changed circumstances, and refusing the listen to the will of the people being a great model of governance at any point in history. On the other hand, my model of governance, based around enlightenment values of liberty, equal opportunity and rational thought, has stood the test of time, proving to be the most stable, most utilitarian, and even the most able to fulfil conservative aims like a strong society and strong families. Throughout history, ideas, institutions and Kings and Queens who have listened and adapted have thrived, while those which have not have lost relevance. It is indeed for the worry of the future of marriage as a strong institution that many young conservatives have become strong

supporters of marriage equality today," Angelle said.

"But are you still so blind that you cannot see the parallels between your own movement and the far-left? Both arose as fads around the same time, both will implode at some point in the future," Jashor said.

"I'm sorry, your majesty, but I'm instead seeing the parallels between your governance and the far-left. Different in content, but similar in methods. A top-down governance where conformity is expected and liberty means nothing. A vision that does not include much freedom. Both of you are too obsessed with imposing your will on the rest of society, rather than let the free market of ideas work out the best solutions in the natural way. But people can only live with taking orders against their own conscience for so long. Sooner or later, it

will not hold. Neither the far-left or your government really respect people's equal moral agency or really listen to what the people out there really want, so neither of you will have people's respect and support for too long, I imagine. The implosion of your party is already under way, with many younger members having resigned because of marriage equality and other issues," Angelle said.

"Well, I think young lady here really doesn't know much about the real world of governance. But we're running out of time today. So I think we should end it here," Jashor said.

"Thanks for your time, your majesty," Angelle said.

Chapter 14

A New Nation

The results came in quickly. In the end, it was a landslide. Jashor's patronising attitude and inability to effectively counter Angelle's questions in the debate shook to the core many people's confidence in him. The lackluster economy and the lack of opportunities for many young people caused growing resentment against the governance and its ideology. The festering sore of the division over marriage equality also made the whole conservative movement directionless and passionless. The end of Jashor's reign had a feeling of inevitability about it, when it finally came.

"It's time to give your victory speech," Natalie said.

Angelle stepped up to the platform.

"Dear ladies and gentlemen, the great people of Pacificland,

I am honoured to be elected to serve Pacificland as its Queen for the next four years. I have to thank all my supporters, all the volunteers, and especially the support of my great family. Thank you mom, thank you dad, and thank you Sam, my great fiancé.

Being Queen of such a great nation is a daunting task, and many people have doubted my experience. Fortunately, for me it's not about my way or the highway. The next four years is not about me shoving my beliefs down society. The next four years will be about you,

your opportunities, your aspirations, and your moral agency. Some people say that when you change the person on the throne you change society. You may wonder what change is in store. The answer is simple: Pacifiland will get to know liberty and opportunity like never before. It will get to know and get used to the fact that the way society functions does not need to depend on the whims of the King or Queen at all. Paciflanders will rediscover their moral agency, and come to learn how to use this birthright well.

But this is all I will say for now. As I said, it's not all about me. So here are the perspectives on what I will do or at least should do, from other people," Angelle said.

Natalie took to the stage next, bringing along a whole group of people, including Katie, Jenelle and others.

"I'm Natalie. You may know me as the Chairperson of the Heirs Council, but I am also a close friend of Angelle. It may surprise some of you that Angelle hasn't always been a supporter of marriage equality. I was the first person to convince her about it. But the thing was, she was a listener, and wouldn't let the prejudices of her own upbringing get in the way. And I'm talking about back in 2003 too, back when it was an unconventional idea. Angelle doesn't shy away from the unconventional, and doesn't feel a need to conform to everyone's ideas. I'm sure that under her reign, Pacificlanders will also learn to love the idea of being unique, of developing and acting on one's own conscience, and of respecting other people's different ideas."

"I'm Jenny, supporter and friend of Angelle, who once quit her camp and came back a

decade later. I first joined her camp because I was friends with Natalie, and later quit because I was pressured by my family and church, who said I shouldn't support or even be friends with a so-called gay marriage activist. But the truth was that, gay marriage activist she was not. She was only concerned about freedom and equal opportunity for everyone, and something she calls equal moral agency. Later on, she was crucial to bringing conservatives around to support marriage equality on family values grounds and support other aspects of liberty and equality too. Her inclusive approach not only made me eventually comfortable to rejoin her camp, but I was also able to convince my family and some church friends to become supporters. Angelle is Queen who will rule for all, and do so equally. The culture wars will come to an end under her reign."

"I'm Ashley, Natalie's sister. I'm also in a same-sex marriage. We got married in 2006 overseas

and it's high time this marriage is recognised here. It's just one of the things Angelle will fix. Not so long ago I was almost an outcast among my gay friends for supporting Angelle. People thought I was doing it for Natalie's sake. Why should we, as a community, support Angelle, when she wouldn't support every one of our demands, some would say. It's true that Angelle has never supported us getting special rights like our own dedicated LGBT representative in parliament, or the ability of gay clubs to exclude straight people, but that's because she treats everyone the same way. Where we are being treated inferiorly, as in marriage laws, Angelle is passionate to fix. In fact, when those on the left that my gay friends used to support eventually turned on us, asking us to wait indefinitely for marriage equality or be called selfish, it was Angelle who came to the rescue. Angelle recognises that there is nothing selfish about demanding for your rights and to have them as soon as possible, and nobody has a responsibility to sacrifice their rights for a vague

so-called greater good. I'm sure that any minorities out there who are still being mistreated, she will come to your assistance in the same way."

"I'm Katie, supporter and friend of Angelle. My admiration for her began during the 2004 Heirs Council campaign, where she was the underdog who wouldn't bend her values to suit the then fashion of the times. Throughout the years, Angelle has stayed true to her values, even as the political winds blew one way, and then the other. You always know what Angelle stands for."

"I'm Chee, founder of the former movement called Occupy Heirs Council. We set out as a movement for liberty and equal opportunity for the 99% of society, and was surprised that an apparently privileged MHC would have time for us. Later on, we were hijacked by the far-left

and then quashed by Jashor, in a parallel with many similar movements overseas. But our goal had at least been partially met. Our concerns were heard by a future Queen, and her policies have taken our concerns into account."

"I'm Senator Ramstown, failed candidate for the throne in 2013. Angelle shares a lot of my values, although I have to say that she is probably more philosophical and I'm more pragmatic. She supported my campaign in 2013, and the far-left used an irrelevant Heirs Council controversy to discredit me through discrediting her. She actually felt guilty about it, and withdrew from politics altogether. For many months, I wrote to her to convince her that it was not her fault, and that it would be a waste if she just withdrew from public life. I was prepared to be disappointed. But when we explained to her that there was no other hope last year, she rose to the challenge, rising high

into the sky from the ashes. Angelle doesn't disappoint her supporters, I later learnt."

"I'm Jenelle, newly elected Cultural Princess in the Class of 2016, and a, you can say, frenemy, of Angelle. For most of my time at Royal College I saw Angelle as an enemy, simply because my family taught me that her kind were troublemakers. I also used to believe that good governments are the ones that uphold traditional practices and institutions, and put troublemakers in their place. But this was not good government, or even good conservatism. It was just elitist dictatorship. While culturally I remain a dedicated conservative, I have since realised that liberty-based governance is the best bet in the long run for anyone with a conscience, conservative or otherwise. I also have to say that Angelle has been both a worthy adversary and a great friend. A worthy adversary, because she would really put effort into thinking about arguments you put to her

rather than just mouth the usual clichés, and a great friend, because even if you were once enemies with her, she will still care about your feelings, apparently. So King Jashor, you can be sure that Angelle won't mistreat you the way you mistreated her."

THE END

Also from TaraElla...

The Story of a 21st Century 'Somebody': Independent Culture Creation in the 2000s & 2010s

For most of humanity, most people were destined to live and die anonymously. To be 'somebody' in this world, a somebody whose opinions would be heard in any way beyond close friends, was a privilege very few had enjoyed. In this environment, there would eventually be no point for most people to continue to think of themselves as a 'unique individual'. It surely looks amazing in hindsight, how far we have come in less than two decades.

This book is primarily about my journey to become a 'somebody' with something to say. Topics covered include how technology has enabled people like myself to have a voice,

what it feels like to join the cultural conversation and take cultural stances, and participating in politics and the 'culture wars' through citizen journalism. I will also examine the bigger cultural impacts of this democratization of culture creation.

Throughout this book, I will be telling my own story so far, as a cultural voice in this rapidly changing world. But I will also be illustrating the wider story of how profoundly the world changed, in these first two decades of the 21st century. The technology changed first, and that was groundbreaking enough, but I think that the greatest change was in the culture.

Also from TaraElla...

Princess's Spirit Life Ideas #2:

Yes, You Can Change The World Too!

You get to vote every three, four or five years, but the politicians never listen to us anyway, right? As a result of thinking like this, many people just observe the world go by. And as a result of that, some things never really change. In other words, we just give up.

The 21st century is like no other time in human history. Just the first less than two decades that we have seen so far, the 2000s and the 2010s, have seen a great expansion in the possibilities for everyone to contribute to the cultural pool, with major implications. We need to harness this power for good, we have a responsibility to do so.

